



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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Colchester Resident Awarded by the SBA for His Outstanding Efforts in Support of Small Businesses in the State of Connecticut

Hartford—Edward E. Cull, Assistant Vice President & Team Leader of Citizens Business Banking Group in Connecticut, has been named Financial Services Advocate of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for 2004.

Ed Cull, a resident of Colchester, is awarded for his many years of commitment and dedication to small business men and women of Connecticut. In his current position with Citizens Bank he is responsible for over 55,000 small business customers in Connecticut.

Under Ed's outstanding leadership, guidance and management, Citizens Bank has once again gained statewide recognition for its commitment to small businesses. With Ed's strategic focus, advocacy, and direction Citizens Bank was named #1 SBA lender in Connecticut and the bank was named #1 SBA Lender in New England for FY 2003 by the SBA. Citizens topped all Connecticut lenders in the number of SBA loans approved with 354 loans totaling more than \$2.3 million reaching the local Connecticut's economy. In addition, based on Ed's leadership with the "emerging markets", Citizens was recognized by the SBA as New England's most active lender to minorities and targeted groups, particularly to women-owned businesses.

Ed has also helped introduce a small business "Bank-at-Work" Program. This program allows companies the option of offering discounted products and services at Citizens because of their business relationship with the Bank. This is an additional benefit to their employees, and a feature the small business customer truly appreciates.

Another example of Ed's advocacy and innovative approach to assist small business was his leadership in implementing a weekly "blitz" program. This program allowed Business Banking Officers and Branch Managers the opportunity to go out into the community and meet with small business customers to discuss their banking and investment needs. Not having to come to the bank allows these entrepreneurs the ability to optimize their precious business time.

It is Ed's goal to be an effective partner to the small business community. As the Team Leader of Small Business Banking, he is dedicated to providing the products, services and support company's' need to successfully run their businesses.

The SBA annually recognizes individuals and businesses for their experience, expertise and devotion to their professional and personal lives to bettering the small business environment. This recognition is made in conjunction with the nationally celebrated Small Business Week in Orlando, Florida during SBA Expo '04 held May 19-21.

Ed and all SBW 2004 award recipients will be honored on Thursday, June 3, 2004 at The Belvedere (formerly Septembers), in New Haven, CT. If you would like more information on this event, or next year's nominations contact Debra Dillon at (860) 240-4700 ext. 242.

A complete list of the 2004 Small Business Week award recipients is attached.

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2004 SMALL BUSINESS WEEK AWARD WINNERS

Small Business Person of the Year

Lesley Mills

Griswold Special Care

New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, Meriden, New London, CT

Nominated by

Richard Blumenthal, Attorney General

State of Connecticut

REGIONAL AWARD WINNERS

Minority Small Business Advocate
of the Year

Rafael Collazo

CT Small Bus. Development Center
Hartford, CT

Nominated by

Zaiga L. Antonetti

CT Small Bus. Development Center

Women in Business Advocate
of the Year

Barbara Potopowicz

Perm. Comm. on the Status of Women
Hartford, CT

Nominated by

Rose E. Bednarz

Gateway Community College

Small Business Journalist
of the Year

Mitchell Young

Business New Haven
New Haven, CT

Nominated by

Rose E. Bednarz

Gateway Community College

DISTRICT AWARD WINNERS

Veteran Small Business
Advocate of the Year

Charles C. Young

CT Department of Labor
New London, CT

Nominated by

Lou Kennedy

US Department of Labor

Financial Services Advocate
of the Year

Edward E. Cull

Citizens Bank Connecticut
Middletown, CT

Nominated by

John Rosevear

Citizens Financial Group

Small Business Exporter
of the Year

Raymond Browne

David Monighetti

Wyrepak Industries, Inc.
Middletown, CT

Nominated by

Sandra K. Weber

Hudson United Bank